



## Cultivating collaborations in South America

**S**antiago, the capital of Chile, sits in a valley surrounded by the breathtaking Andes mountains and the Cordillera de la Costa. A growing economy, emissions from factories, rapid urban expansion and an increasing rate of automobile use expose the city's five million inhabitants to high levels of air pollution. Air pollution tends to be worse during the southern hemisphere's winter, because a blanket of cold air over the mountainous bowl in which Santiago sits prevents polluted air from leaving.

Chile is the world's largest producer of copper, and industrial emissions from the mining sector, and smelter operations contribute considerable amounts of pollutants to both the air and water; chief pollutants include sulfur dioxide, arsenic and suspended particulate matter.

Through UC Davis' Fogarty International Training Program, which focuses on technology transfer with South America in the broad field of environmental health, Stephen McCurdy, M.D., M.P.H., research coordinator for the Western Center for Agricultural Health & Safety, visited Santiago, Chile, in June 2003 to discuss with investigators there his occupational injury research projects and explore possible collaborations.

McCurdy's audience consisted of 30-40 investigators from various  
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Participants in the International Respiratory Epidemiology Course in Buenos Aires, Argentina, included (from left) Drs. Carlos Ubilla, Maria Palomino, Carlos Mosca, Stephen McCurdy, Lucia Marzoratti, Oscar Rizzo, Xavier Bocca and Alejandro Videla. The course is jointly sponsored by the American Thoracic Society and the Asociación Argentina de Medicina Respiratoria, with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development and Boehringer, Ingelheim, GlaxoSmithKlein and Bayer Co.

## Ag health & safety conference in San Francisco, Sept. 7-9

**S**an Francisco's Crowne Plaza Union Square is the site for this year's West Coast agricultural health and safety conference, "Challenges in Agricultural Health and Safety." The event is sponsored by the Western Center for Agricultural Health & Safety at UC Davis, Pacific Northwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center at the University of Washington, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health at UC Berkeley, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, with several co-sponsors (listed in the conference brochure).

Thematic sessions for this year's conference include:

- ▶ Respiratory Disease in California,
- ▶ Farm Families and Life Cycle Health Issues,
- ▶ Minority and Farm Worker Health Issues,
- ▶ Agricultural Injuries and Ergonomics,

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institutions, including the University of Chile, University of Santiago, and the Centro Nacional del Medio Ambiente (CENMA, National Center for the Environment). All have an interest in environmental health, specifically related to pesticides, heavy metal contamination of water, and air pollution.

“In addition to collaboration on various research efforts, UC Davis has important educational offerings that can strengthen research talent in South America,” said McCurdy. “Last year, for example, the UCD Fogarty Program sponsored two Brazilian physicians to come to UCD to learn industrial hygiene techniques important for their research on dust-related lung disease. Both of these physicians recently published articles on their work and were accepted into the Epidemic Intelligence Service, working with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.”

In addition, UC Davis offers a week-long intensive course in clinical epidemiology and study design that would be of interest to South American investigators.

“This course can jumpstart academic careers and be a starting point for future collaborations,” added McCurdy.



Dr. Stephen McCurdy (right) and Dr. Sonia Buist (center) congratulate Argentine physician Dr. Lucia Marzoratti on her successful completion of the the International Respiratory Epidemiology Course in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 2003.

The Fogarty Center, directed by Jerold Last, Ph.D., professor of pulmonary medicine at UC Davis, offers short- and long-term exchange visits to UC Davis for training in environmental toxicology and exposure assessment, epidemiology, food safety and other components of environmental and occupational health. The center’s investigators also develop programs to increase laboratory expertise in South

American countries engaged in surveillance, epidemiology and other studies related to environmental and occupational health through in-country training and technology transfer.

While in South America, McCurdy also traveled across the continent to co-teach in the port city of Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, a week-long course on basic clinical epidemiology and study design for the American Thoracic Society’s International Respiratory Epidemiology course.

McCurdy says he enjoyed seeing some beautiful parts of Argentina, including the Iguazú Falls, “which puts Niagara Falls to shame,” and hopes that his visits will result in collaborative research with investigators in Chile and Argentina.

For more information about the UC Davis Fogarty Program, visit <http://ucdfogartyprogram.ucdavis.edu> on the Web. To learn more about the American Thoracic Society’s educational programs, visit [www.thoracic.org](http://www.thoracic.org), or to contact Dr. McCurdy, send an mail to [samccurdy@ucdavis.edu](mailto:samccurdy@ucdavis.edu).



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- ▶ Policy and Regulatory Issues in Agriculture, and
- ▶ Directions to Improve Health and Safety—Enforcement, Engineering and Education.

On Sunday, Sept. 7, an optional agricultural tour through scenic Sonoma County will include information on local agriculture, and a stop at Viansa Winery for wine tasting and a picnic lunch. The tour is open to registrants and non-registrants, and reservations will be honored on a first-come, first-served basis.

Conference participants may receive Continuing Medical Education credit through the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, a CMA-accredited provider.

To obtain a downloadable version of the conference brochure and agenda, visit <http://agcenter.ucdavis.edu> on the Web and click on “News & Events.”



## UFW working with growers and workers to strengthen industry

**F**or more than a century farm workers were denied a decent life in the fields and communities of California's agricultural valleys. But by 1962 things were beginning to change, thanks to a young Chicano named Cesar Chavez, the son of a family of extremely poor farm workers, who founded and became national director of the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). From his base in Delano, Calif., Chavez traveled for three years from town to town in the central valley of California, meeting with groups of farm workers in their homes to build an organization he hoped would one day become an effective union. The merging of an earlier farm workers organization called the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), founded by Dolores Huerta in 1963, and Chavez' NFWA, resulted in the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC).

Today, the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO (UFW), is the largest union of farm workers in the country, with regional offices throughout California and in Texas, Florida and Washington State. The union now has 27,000 members and has won 25 elections and 28 new contracts since 1994.

In June, the Western Center for Agricultural Health & Safety hosted a noon talk by Martha Guzman, M.S., legislative coordinator for the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO. Guzman gave an overview of the UFW organization and the Farm Worker Movement and discussed some of its successes throughout its 40-year history.

One entity within the Farm Worker Movement is the Farm worker Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD). "FIELD is currently concentrating on filling the gap of the seasonality of the work force," said Guzman. "One of its goals is to allow workers in the Kern County area to work in table grape and citrus farming, providing year-round work, since the seasons don't overlap too much."

FIELD also provides worker safety training tailored to specific company needs. Guzman described how one company, over a three-year safety training period, reduced its workers' compensation liability by nearly \$1 million.

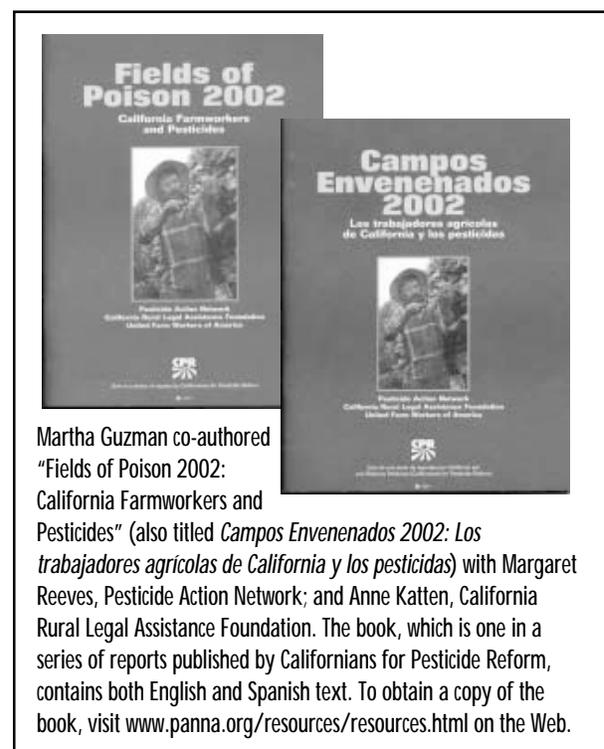
Another entity of the Farm Worker Movement—the National Farm Workers Service Center—

operates Radio Campesina, a network of popular Spanish-language farm worker radio stations in three states. The network is used for outreach, political programming, and even job recruitment. National Farm Worker Service Center builds quality, amenity-intensive single family homes and rental complexes for low-income farm workers and other residents.

"It began with a small housing unit in Delano targeted to Filipino farm workers, and today they have a village for retired farm workers—they're real houses, not bunk houses," said Guzman.

Guzman is proud of the accomplishments the UFW has made in recent years through communication and partnering with companies. "There are so many programs out there—state and federal—that growers just don't know about. For example, during our energy crisis, the Department of Energy offered various grant programs in California to help offset costs—from irrigation time use to replacement of outdated facilities," said Guzman. "We encouraged some of our companies to apply for some of these grants. A few of them replaced pumps, and some of them actually had subsidy to replace entire freezing facilities."

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Washington apple growers are struggling to stay competitive with imports from Chinese apple growers. Recently, the UFW partnered with a group of Washington apple growers. The Kellogg Foundation, as well as other funders, has been supportive of the efforts. “We’re continuing to work with them as they search for a solution to these global competition pricing issues, looking at labor and production to determine how to get a better percentage of the dollar,” said Guzman.

She says she believes most issues can be resolved through better communication. “About 90 percent of our contracts are re-statement of current law—for example, having water and restrooms available at a work site,” she said. “It’s sad, but the reality is that we pass all of these laws and often we can’t enforce them. There’s nothing better than a worker knowing what his rights are and enforcing them himself.”

For more information, call Martha Guzman at (916) 341-0612, or send an e-mail to [mguzman@ufwsacramento.org](mailto:mguzman@ufwsacramento.org).

**UFW ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, the United Farm Workers made historic achievements for farm workers. Among them are:

- ▶ In 1966, the first genuine collective bargaining agreement between farm workers and growers in the history of the United States.
- ▶ The first union contracts requiring rest periods, clean drinking water, hand washing facilities, protective clothing against pesticide exposure, banning pesticide spraying while workers are in the fields, and outlawing DDT and other dangerous pesticides.
- ▶ The first union contracts eliminating farm labor contractors and guaranteeing farm workers seniority rights and job security.
- ▶ The first comprehensive union health benefits for farm workers and their families through UFW’s Robert F. Kennedy Medical Plan.
- ▶ The first pension plan for retired farm workers—the Juan de la Cruz Pension Plan.
- ▶ The first functioning credit union for farm workers.
- ▶ The first union contracts restricting the use of dangerous pesticides, lengthening pesticide re-entry periods beyond state and federal standards, and requiring testing of farm workers on a regular basis to monitor for pesticide exposure.
- ▶ The first union contracts regulating safety and sanitary conditions in farm labor camps, banning discrimination in employment and sexual harassment of women workers.
- ▶ The first union contracts providing for profit sharing and parental leave.
- ▶ Abolishing the short-handled hoe that crippled generations of farm workers and extending to farm workers state coverage under unemployment, disability and workers’ compensation, as well as amnesty rights for immigrants and public assistance for farm workers.
- ▶ Establishing in 1966 the National Farm Worker Service Center, Inc., a non-profit tax-exempt organization separate from the UFW. It operates Radio Campesina, a network of Spanish-language radio stations, and builds homes and rental complexes for low-income farm workers and other residents.

## New guide for safe play areas on farms

**C**reating *Safe Play Areas on Farms* is a 32-page guidance document developed at Marshfield Clinic’s National Farm Medicine Center. The booklet was developed for safety professionals, farm and rural community leaders, and farm owners who want to learn more about important features of safe play areas for children who live on or visit farms, ranches and other agricultural settings. The document discusses child development, safe and unsafe play areas, fencing and borders. It examines play hazards unique to farms and describes play ideas

and equipment that can be modified for a farm. *Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms* is available in both hard copy and on the National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety Web site, <http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children>. For more information, call (800) 662-6900.



## CalAgrAbility keeps 'em down on the farm

If hearing loss, arthritis or back injury is hindering your work on the farm, a new University of California project is the place to call. The California AgrAbility Project will help physically challenged farmers and workers modify their work environment to better suit their abilities. The Farm Safety Program in the UC Davis Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering (UC Cooperative Extension) has teamed up with Easter Seals Superior California to offer assistance to farmers and workers with disabling injuries and/or illnesses. The goal is to help them remain working on the farm.

***“What is important to keep in mind is that there are solutions for dealing with conditions that make it difficult for farmers and workers to continue working.”***

More than 20,000 disabling injuries occur on California farms each year, according to UC Davis research. CalAgrAbility staff can help these individuals design and customize assistance plans, based on the type of farming operation or job tasks. According to Martha Stiles, UC CalAgrAbility coordinator, the needs and the work goals of the individuals are of key importance as are the needs of the family. The plan may include worksite modification, peer support, job restructuring, and equipment purchase or modification.

“We can help identify funding, services or care resources, and we can also help with stress management, community and health care coordination,” said Stiles. “What is important to keep in mind is that there are solutions for dealing with conditions that make it difficult for farmers and workers to continue working.”

A solution may consist merely of rearranging a work site, such as moving materials closer, adjusting the height of equipment, or adapting a hand tool so that it is more ergonomically safe for someone with an injury.

Stiles and her CalAgrAbility Easter Seals staff visit with customers to jointly establish goals and objectives to get them back to work on the farm or to make their current farm tasks less arduous.

California is one of 21 states offering this service. Although the program is relatively new in California, CalAgrAbility has already begun assisting people. For example, CalAgrAbility helped a farm worker who is permanently in a wheelchair as a result of a car crash injury obtain computer equipment so he can work in a farm office and continue his education. Stiles also helped a raisin grower locate resources to replace his old prosthetic leg with a better fitting limb to eliminate his pain. He has farmed his 40 acres for 40 years with a prosthetic leg, but wanted to reduce his pain and discomfort.

CalAgrAbility services are available to individuals and their families who are engaged in farming or farm-related occupations and who are coping with the effects of a physical disability such as arthritis, chronic back pain, respiratory illness, amputation, or hearing or vision impairments.

Applicants should live or work in the 13-county Easter Seals Superior region, which includes Amador, Alpine, Calaveras, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tuolumne, Yolo or Yuba. This project is funded by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

To enroll or to obtain more information about CalAgrAbility, contact Martha Stiles at (530) 752-2606, or Easter Seals representative Marcie Moreno at (916) 679-3117. For more information about the national AgrAbility Project, please visit the Web at <http://calagrability.ucdavis.edu/>.



From left, Marcie Moreno, Easter Seals' outreach assistant, and Martha Stiles, UC Davis CalAgrAbility statewide coordinator, pose for a photo with Francisco Ayala, a Sacramento County farm worker, after delivering a computer donated by Easter Seals.

# CALENDAR

**September 7–9**, Crowne Plaza Union Square San Francisco, CA

***Challenges in Agricultural Health & Safety***

For information, please visit <http://agcenter.ucdavis.edu>, or call Kathy Ponce at (530) 752-4050.

**October 3**, 12:10–1p.m., TB 137, UC Davis Campus

***First noon seminar series event of the 2003–2004 school year.***

For information, call Kathy Ponce at (530) 752-4050.

***UC IPM Pesticide training workshops***

For information, visit [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/IPMPROJECT/workshops.html](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/IPMPROJECT/workshops.html) on the Web.

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